

in Pueblo, CO, said they checked the box on their touch screen panel to vote for Mitt Romney, but it kept switching their pick to President Obama. "I wonder whether my vote really counted," one Colorado voter said.

Voters in Pennsylvania reported a similar problem, although in that case it was the President for whom they were seemingly unable to vote.

Poll watchers in Davidson County, TN, could only stand by as would-be voters saw the very, very long line of people waiting to cast their ballots and drove away, pressed, I am sure, by commitments of family or work to choose not to spend hours standing in line to exercise that most fundamental of American rights—the right to vote.

In Philadelphia, longtime registered voters who showed up to cast their ballots discovered their names simply weren't on the rolls anymore.

In Ohio, Wisconsin, South Carolina, New York, Montana—more than a dozen States experienced some kind of basic breakdown in the administration of their elections in 2012.

This is the United States. The right to vote is fundamental to who we are. It is basic to our democracy. It is in our DNA. We have to get this right.

That is why I introduced the Fair, Accurate, Secure, and Timely—or FAST—Voting Act of 2012, along with Senators WARNER and WHITEHOUSE. And I am grateful that Congressmen CONNOLLY and LANGEVIN in the House have introduced it and are cosponsors there.

In my view, long lines are simply another form of disenfranchising voters. Running out of ballots is simply another form of voter suppression. Incomplete and inaccurate voter rolls, disregarded voter registrations, misleading phone calls and mailing pieces—things that make it harder for citizens to vote are simply a violation of voters' civil rights.

We can and must do better. As widespread as the problem was in 2012, there are also many States that are getting it right, and these States, in my view, continue to be laboratories of democracy from which we should learn. The FAST Voting Act creates a new competitive Federal grant program roughly modeled on Race to the Top, which encourages States to pursue reforms in a different field, in education. States that demonstrate the most comprehensive and promising reform plans win a greater portion of the grant funding in that model. Instead, the FAST Voting Act would inspire election reform. This bill authorizes a Federal program that would award grants based on how well States improve access to the ballot in at least 9 different ways: through flexible registration opportunities, including same-day registration; through early voting at a minimum of 9 of the 10 calendar days preceding an election; through what is called no-excuse absentee voting; assistance to voters who do not speak English or have disabilities or visual

impairments; effective access to voting for members of our armed services; formal training of election officials, including State and county administrators and volunteers; audited and reduced waiting times at poorest performing polling stations; and, as we learned given that Sandy, Superstorm Sandy, occurred close to the election, contingency plans for voting in the event of a natural or other disaster that compels a delay of an election.

These are the big areas mentioned in this FAST Voting Act, making it easier to register, making it easier to vote early, making it easier to vote absentee, shortening lines, better preparing for catastrophes, making it easier for Americans to exercise their right to vote.

This is a good one, and I am working with a host of civil rights and voter protection groups who work, day in and day out, on strengthening our electoral process. It encourages States and localities to find new and creative and local solutions that other States can learn from.

Mr. President, as you know, in my service prior to coming to this body I was a county executive and long active with NACO, the Nation Association of Counties. Counties have different roles in different States. There are more than 3,000 counties spread across our 50 States but in most States they are responsible in part for administering elections. Many election officials are county-elected officials and many voter boards are parts of county government. One of the things I think is best about this bill, this FAST Voting Act of 2012, is that rather than mandating some specific response it encourages and incentivizes State and local officials to put together plans for how to learn from the lessons of 2012, how to learn from the long lines and the barriers that were put in front of those who came out to vote, and finding the best solutions; rather than imposing or compelling, incentivizing and leading in a way that I think State and local officials will respond to well and will accept and celebrate.

There is strong momentum. Although the election is now more than a month behind us, my hope is that we will continue to focus on the challenges of this last election and fix them before the next. The Pew Conference, today and tomorrow, on voting in America is bringing together some of our Nation's foremost experts and scholars. For that we are grateful to the Pew Charitable Foundation.

The Judiciary Committee on which we serve has a hearing announced this coming week and I applaud Chairman LEAHY and Senator DURBIN for highlighting the need to get to the bottom of what happened in 2012 and championing the need to get reform. Other Members, Senators GILLIBRAND and BOXER, have introduced bills as well and I look forward to working closely with them to harmonize our bills and making sure we have the best approach moving forward.

In addition to serving on the Judiciary Committee, I am chairman of the African Affairs Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee. In that role I advocate for free and fair elections with African leaders every day. The United States is often cited as their role model. We need to act like it and we need to earn it.

What kind of message are we sending to electoral commissions, to heads of State, to members of civil society, and advocates of free, fair, and open elections in the rest of the world when we so visibly and publicly fail to deliver on that promise here in our own country? What kind of message are we sending to Andre Murias, a first-time voter? What kind of message are we sending to Rashell Hobbs? What kind of message are we sending to first-time voters about the value of their right to vote, for which so many fought, worked, struggled, sacrificed, even died in the course of our history? What message do we send to them when we allow modern-day barriers to be put in their place?

Voting is a fundamental civil right, and when States prevent their citizens from exercising that right, whether deliberately through law or through regulations or accidentally through lack of preparation or mere incompetence, it is a violation of voters' civil rights. The Fair, Accurate, Secure and Timely Voting Act is one critical way we can try to fix our elections and make sure what happened across our country in 2012 never happens again.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, last week I came to the floor and was honored to give tributes to some of our departing colleagues. Tonight I am going to take advantage of this time to pay tribute to two other outstanding Senators, colleagues and friends of mine whom I will miss greatly. They are Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON and Senator SCOTT BROWN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, in her marvelous book entitled "American Heroines: The Spirited Women Who Shaped Our Country," Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON wrote the following: "No history can be written appropriately without acknowledging the part women have played in building the greatness of our country."

As my valued colleague and good friend begins a new chapter in her life, I hope she finds the time to add a new chapter to her own book, one that will be fascinating, inspiring—and autobiographical.

Like the women KAY celebrates as an author, from Amelia Earhart to Sally Ride, from Clara Barton to Condoleezza Rice, KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON is a pioneer, a breaker of barriers. In the special election in 1993, the people of

Texas made her the first woman to represent them in the Senate. In the three regular elections since then, they have confirmed their trust in her by ever-increasing margins. As the leader of the Senate Commerce Committee, KAY has been a strong voice for transportation systems that are efficient, safe, and secure. In my own work on the Homeland Security Committee, I am well aware of the major role she played in drafting the airline security bill that Congress passed after the attacks on 9/11/01. She has also worked successfully to include more effective air cargo screening.

From the America COMPETES Act to her steadfast support for NASA, KAY is determined our country will not cede its position as the world's leader in science, technology, and space exploration. When the NASA rover Curiosity thrilled all of us with its perfect landing on Mars this past August, the hands of KAY's legislative leadership were on the controls. Working with KAY as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I know how dedicated she is to ensuring that taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely and efficiently. She is a champion for our small business owners and for policies that promote free enterprise and job creation.

Her complete commitment to the men and women of our Armed Forces is reflected in her years of service on the Armed Services Committee as well as the Military Construction Subcommittee on Appropriations, and her unanimous election this year to serve as chairman of the Board of Visitors at West Point.

In the afterword to her book, KAY wrote that as a young girl growing up in Texas she was so inspired by the lives of great Americans that by the sixth grade she had exhausted all of the biographies on the school library shelf and had to turn elsewhere for book report material. I am sure the story of her own contributions and accomplishments will be avidly read by generations of girls and boys to come.

I wish her all the best as she turns a new page in what has truly been a remarkable life of public service.

SCOTT BROWN

Mr. President, when SCOTT BROWN, a fellow New Englander, came to the Senate 2 years ago, I immediately saw in him those traits shared by the people of our two New England States: a strong work ethic, a determination to always do what he thought was right, and a spirit that was independent and dedicated to doing what was best for his constituents and for his country.

My initial assessment was confirmed by our time working together on so many issues. SCOTT conducted his inspiring 2010 campaign via his now legendary pickup truck. When he got to Washington, he kept his foot on the gas. His work in government at the State and local level in Massachusetts and his distinguished service in the Army National Guard prepared him with experience that made him a respected and effective legislator from

day one. His intellect, energy, and character made him a valued colleague and a dear friend.

SCOTT is a person one could always count on. I have had the opportunity to work closely with SCOTT on so many key issues. In each and every case he brought an informed, thoughtful, and open-minded approach to every issue.

As the ranking member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I have gotten to know SCOTT very well and I appreciate his service on our committee. He placed his top priority on helping to keep our Nation safe from the continuing threat of terrorism. He also worked hard to make our Federal Government more efficient and transparent.

With SCOTT's leadership, the Senate passed bipartisan legislation to help put the Postal Service back on a more sound financial footing and to ensure that this institution could endure. He also authored the STOCK Act, the new law that clearly prohibits insider trading by Members of Congress and their staff.

SCOTT has long been an effective champion for our small business owners, working to ensure that entrepreneurs and innovators in Massachusetts and across the country have the ability to survive and thrive and, most of all, to create good jobs. He has advocated for our Nation's veterans through the Hiring Our Heroes Act that he coauthored, which provides tax credits to small businesses that hire a returning veteran or member of the National Guard Reserve.

SCOTT has been a devoted advocate in the Senate for fiscal responsibility and a balanced budget amendment. At the same time, he kept a firm commitment to helping those most in need. He fought hard for such vital programs as the Low-Income Heating Assistance Program, which is so important to getting through those cold New England winters.

Equally important to SCOTT's hard work in the Senate has been the approach he has always taken in legislating. He studies the issues. He seeks areas where a consensus can be found. From the very first day in the Senate, he demonstrated his belief that compromise is not a dirty word but an absolute necessity if we are to meet the challenges facing America. SCOTT always looked at the issues before Congress not through the lens of a partisan politician but, rather, through the lens of a pragmatic problem-solver.

SCOTT's tenure in the Senate has been far too brief but, perhaps more important, it has been characterized by a remarkable degree of success in transforming good ideas into public laws. Given his Maine roots and strong commitment to Massachusetts, I am sure we will remain good friends in the years to come. But, oh, how I will miss serving with my friend SCOTT BROWN.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today is Human Rights Day, and I wanted to simply add my voice to the many others who have spoken about the important work the United States can do to continue our leadership around the world as a country that holds itself accountable and leads others toward being accountable for a world in which human rights have meaning and substance. There are two things we can do between now and the end of this calendar year that will make a significant contribution to human rights and to the U.S. global leadership.

First, the House of Representatives can take up and pass VAWA, the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization bill passed months ago by this Chamber. It is a strong, broad, sensible reauthorization bill that I think well deserves consideration and passage by the other Chamber.

Second, TVPA, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, needs to be reauthorized. I was proud last month to join with Senator PORTMAN and the Presiding Officer, Senator BLUMENTHAL, as the three of us jointly founded the Caucus to End Human Trafficking. Slavery exists in the world today. In this country and around the world, there are victims of human trafficking whose voices demand to be heard. By reauthorizing TVPA, this Chamber and this country can make a meaningful contribution toward ending trafficking of persons in the United States and around the world.

I simply wanted to add today, Human Rights Day, those two simple calls for action so this Congress and this country can continue our global leadership.

The House of Representatives needs to take up and pass VAWA and the Senate needs to pass the TVPA reauthorization. Together let us continue to make history in America's leadership on human rights.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today on Human Rights Day. Now,